

## CHAPTER TEN

### TRANSITION FROM WASHINGTON

- \* Madge Gates Wallace Dies in the White House, 1952
- \* The Homecoming: Retirement at 219 North Delaware
- \* Madge Wallace's Estate: The Trumans Purchase 219 North Delaware, July 1953

Madge Gates Wallace Dies in the White House, 1952

For nearly a decade, Mrs. Madge Wallace lived with the Trumans in Washington--in apartments, Blair House, and the White House--and at her own home in Independence. Bess Truman insisted on the arrangement, even when her brothers Frank and George offered to have their aging mother live with them. The First Lady would not hear of it, stating, "It's a daughter's duty to look after her mother."<sup>1</sup>

The President's mother-in-law was a proud woman who insisted upon paying her own way. In August 1946, Bess Truman forwarded to her husband a \$40 check from Mrs. Wallace which Mrs. Wallace insisted should go toward the grocery bill at the Summer White House. Harry Truman responded:

Wish your mother wouldn't insist on assuming these bills. She should sit back and let us do the worrying as she didn't in days gone by. I'd like her to feel she hasn't a financial worry in the world as long as I have a job and I want my mother to feel the same way. Don't tell her, but I'll invest her payment of the grocery bill in the game of chance, which I anticipate on the Williamsburg beginning Friday.<sup>2</sup>

Almost a month before the Truman administration became history, Madge Gates Wallace, age 90, died. She lingered for two weeks after suffering a stroke which progressed into

pneumonia. She died at 11:35 a.m., December 5, 1952, in her White House bedroom. With her at her death were the President and Mrs. Truman, and the family physician, Dr. Wallace H. Graham.<sup>3</sup> On December 7, the First Family flew back to Independence for the funeral. The service, held at 3 p.m., December 8, was private and was held at 219 North Delaware.<sup>4</sup> According to her wishes, Madge Wallace's casket was placed in the parlor/music room and an Episcopal minister lead the service. After the funeral, the body was taken to Woodlawn Cemetery for internment in the Gates family plot.<sup>5</sup>

State functions in the White House were cancelled during the month-long family mourning period for Mrs. Wallace. Christmas of 1952, the last during the Truman presidency and the first without Mrs. Wallace, was not spent at the Independence family home as was customary, but in the White House. Only once before, 1947, had the Trumans remained at the White House for Christmas, always preferring to go to their own home in Missouri.<sup>6</sup>

#### The Homecoming: Retirement at 219 North Delaware

Harry S and Bess Wallace Truman left Washington, D.C., immediately following the inauguration of Dwight D. Eisenhower

on January 20, 1953. The former President and his wife were bound for their home in Independence and a well-deserved rest from the rigors of public service. The Trumans, private citizens once again and without Secret Service protection, boarded a train en route for their native Missouri. Along its westbound route, the train passed through cities and towns alike where crowds of people had gathered to greet and cheer the former First Family. On the evening of January 22, 1953, the train pulled into the Independence depot of the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The sight which awaited the couple later made Bess Truman admit that maybe all the years of public service had indeed been worth it.

Approximately 10,000 people turned out to applaud Harry and Bess Truman and welcome them home to Independence. An estimated 8,500 people jammed the vicinity of the railroad depot, and 1,500 more surrounded 219 North Delaware paralyzing the neighborhood for a six-block radius. Twelve Independence police officers were stationed in front of the Truman home as the couple emerged from their automobile, posed for photographs, and made their way up the walk and through the front doors. Harry and Bess Truman had come home to stay.<sup>7</sup>

Madge Wallace's Estate: The Trumans Purchase 219 North  
Delaware, 1953

Unlike her parents, Madge Gates Wallace died intestate. Frank Gates Wallace, her oldest son, financial adviser, and conductor of the family's interests in the Waggoner-Gates Milling Company, was appointed administrator of the estate. Madge Wallace's four children, Bess Truman, Frank G. Wallace, George P. Wallace, and David "Fred" Wallace, agreed to divide their mother's estate equally between them. There never was a question of who among the four would receive the Gates-Wallace mansion. The three Wallace brothers had their own established homes and 219 North Delaware, the Summer White House, had been the home of Bess Wallace Truman for nearly half a century. The house would go to her.<sup>8</sup> Margaret Truman recalled:

...my grandmother died without leaving a will so the whole family had agreed that Mother and Dad should live here. This should be their house. But they insisted on buying, assuming that everybody had a quarter share, and paying everybody what a quarter share was worth. That they would own it free and clear.<sup>9</sup>

The first and largest of four financial claims filed against Madge Wallace's estate was by Harry S Truman. He asked the probate court for the payment of \$9,373.64 to cover the cost of labor and material for unspecified repairs to the residence at 219 North Delaware. The period the repairs

covered was from August 8, 1945, to November 28, 1950.<sup>10</sup>

According to Truman's lawyer, Rufus Burrus, the claim covered the cost of the 1950 rear porch extension, roof repairs, and interior repairs.<sup>11</sup>

The probate court allowed the Truman claim on March 20, 1953. On March 28, it approved another request by estate administrator, Frank G. Wallace. Wallace declared that since the estate was unable to pay its creditors without converting some of its assets into cash, Mrs. Madge Wallace's Waggoner-Gates Milling Company stocks should be sold. The court agreed and two certificates were sold to the Waggoner family for \$23,531.25.<sup>12</sup>

The remaining three claims filed against the estate also involved the Gates-Wallace house. On April 22, 1953, John S. Hurst filed a claim for \$625 for "repairs to the property caused by windstorm." Similarly, on June 16, the Earl Hawkins Roofing Company filed claim for \$239.60 for "repairs to roof caused by windstorm." The final claim on July 8 by the Western Adjustment and Inspection Company asked for \$864.60 "covering damage caused by windstorm."<sup>13</sup>

There is no indication when the windstorm occurred or when the above stated repairs were accomplished. The total sum of

repairs conducted at 219 North Delaware filed against the estate of Madge Gates Wallace was \$11,102.84.

The process for transferring ownership of 219 North Delaware to Harry and Bess Truman began and was completed in July 1953. Possibly because the Trumans wanted to speed the legal process or avoid certain tax requirements, the heirs of Madge Wallace deeded the property to Frank G. Wallace, oldest son and estate administrator, on July 17, 1953.<sup>14</sup> Eight days later, on July 25, 1953, Frank G. Wallace and Natalie O. Wallace, his wife, in turn deeded the property at 219 North Delaware to

Harry S. Truman and Elizabeth (Bess) Truman, husband and wife, as an estate by the entirety with right of survivorship... in the consideration of the sum of ONE (\$1.00) DOLLAR and other valuable considerations.<sup>15</sup>

According to family lawyer Rufus Burrus, the couple wanted the property placed in both their names in order for it to revert automatically to the surviving partner<sup>16</sup> (See Figure 28).

The appraised price for the property was revealed on February 8, 1954, when the final settlement of the estate was filed in probate court. The value of the real estate, not including "household effects and other chattels," was appraised at \$25,000.<sup>17</sup> Bess Truman's share of the property, therefore,

## Missouri Warranty Deed

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This Indenture, Made on the 25th day of July A. D., One

Thousand Nine Hundred and Fifty-three by and between

FRANK G. WALLACE and NATALIE O. WALLACE, his wife,

of the County of Jackson, State of Missouri parties of the first part, and  
 HARRY S. TRUMAN and ELIZABETH (Bess) TRUMAN, husband and wife, as an  
 estate by the entirety with right of survivorship,

of the County of Jackson, State of Missouri parties of the second part,

WITNESSETH: THAT THE SAID PARTIES OF THE FIRST PART, in consideration of the  
 sum of ONE (\$1.00) DOLLAR, and other valuable consideration - - DOLLARS,  
 to them paid by said parties of the second part (the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged), do  
 by these presents, Grant, Bargain and Sell, Convey and Confirm unto the said parties of the second  
 part their heirs and assigns, the following described lots, tracts or parcels of land  
 lying, being and situate in the County of Jackson and State of Missouri, to wit:

All of Lots Two (2) and Three (3), MOORE'S  
 ADDITION in and to the CITY OF INDEPENDENCE,  
 Jackson County, Missouri.



TO HAVE AND TO HOLD The premises aforesaid with all and singular, the rights, privileges, appur-  
 tenances and immunities thereto belonging or in any wise appertaining unto the said parties of the  
 second part and unto their heirs and assigns forever; the said Frank G. Wallace and  
 Natalie O. Wallace hereby covenanting that they are  
 lawfully seized of an indefeasible estate in fee of the premises herein conveyed; that they have  
 good right to convey the same; that the said premises are free and clear from any incumbrance done or suf-  
 fered by them or those under whom they claim; and that they will  
 warrant and defend the title to the said premises unto the said parties of the second part and unto  
 their heirs and assigns forever, against the lawful claims and demands of all persons  
 whomsoever

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, The said parties of the first part have hereunder set their  
 hands and seal the day and year above written.

Frank G. Wallace (SEAL)  
 Natalie O. Wallace (SEAL)

(SEAL)



came to \$6,250. To purchase the remaining three-fourths interests in the house, Harry and Bess Truman paid at least \$18,750.

On May 10, 1954, the probate court approved the final settlement. The financial breakdown was as follows:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Relationship</u>	<u>Financial Settlement</u>
Elizabeth (Bess) Truman	Daughter	Bonds \$4,000.00 Cash 4,385.90
Frank G. Wallace	Son	Bonds 4,000.00 Cash 4,385.90
George P. Wallace	Son	Bonds 4,000.00 Cash 4,385.90
David Frederick Wallace	Son	Bonds 4,000.00 Cash 4,385.90
	Total:	\$33,543.60 <sup>18</sup>

With the one-fourth interest in 219 North Delaware, each heir received a total of \$14,635.90 from their mother's estate.

#### Madge Gates Wallace Dies In the White House, 1952

<sup>1</sup>Robert Underhill, The Truman Persuasions (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1981), p. 44.

<sup>2</sup>Robert Ferrell, Dear Bess (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1983), p. 530. The letter from the White House was dated August 12, 1946.

<sup>3</sup>"Mrs. Wallace Is Dead," Kansas City Star (December 5, 1952), p. 1, White House Scrapbooks, HSTL.

<sup>4</sup>"Mrs. Wallace's Rites Simple," Examiner (December 8, 1952), p. 1, Mid-Continent Public Library, North Branch, Independence, Mo.

<sup>5</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 40.

<sup>6</sup>Austin Stevens, "President Carves At Family Dinner," New York Times (December 25, 1952), White House Scrapbooks, HSTL.

The Homecoming: Retirement at 219 North Delaware

<sup>7</sup>"Home To Cheers," Kansas City Times (January 22, 1953), p. 1, folder-Truman, Harry S Jan.-March 1953, Research Room Vertical File, HSTL. Margaret had established her own residence in New York and did not accompany her parents on this trip home.

Madge Wallace's Estate: The Trumans Purchase 219 North Delaware, July 1953

<sup>8</sup>Mrs. George P. (May) Wallace, Interview, Independence, Mo., June 14, 1983.

<sup>9</sup>Cockrell, "Oral History Interview with Margaret Truman," p. 42.

<sup>10</sup>Receipt for Claim, Harry S Truman to Administrator Frank G. Wallace, undated, No. 9784, Estate of Madge Gates Wallace, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Mo.

<sup>11</sup>Col. Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, Mo., July 22, 1983.

<sup>12</sup>"Application For Authority To Sell Shares of Stock In Waggoner-Gates Milling Company," Frank G. Wallace, Administrator, filed March 28, 1953, No. 9784, Estate of Madge Gates Wallace, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Mo.

<sup>13</sup>Semi-Annual Settlement, Frank G. Wallace, Administrator, September 30, 1953, No. 9784, Estate of Madge Gates Wallace, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Mo.

<sup>14</sup>Missouri Warranty Deed, George P. and Mary S. Wallace,

David Frederick and Christine M. Wallace, and Elizabeth (Bess) and Harry S Truman, to Frank G. Wallace, July 17, 1953, Land Book 1034, Page 627, No. 609417, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Mo.

<sup>15</sup>Missouri Warranty Deed, Frank G. and Natalie O. Wallace to Harry S and Elizabeth (Bess) Truman, July 25, 1983, Land Book 1034, Page 631, No. 609418, Office of Deeds, Jackson County Courthouse, Independence, Mo.

<sup>16</sup>Col. Rufus Burrus, Interview, Independence, Mo., July 22, 1983.

<sup>17</sup>Report of Appraiser, February 8, 1954, No. 9784, Estate of Madge Gates Wallace, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Mo.

<sup>18</sup>Finding and Order Discharging Administrator, Final Settlement Approved, May 10, 1954, Frank Wallace, Administrator, to the Jackson County Probate Court, No. 9784, Estate of Madge Gates Wallace, Office of the Probate Court of Jackson County, Independence, Mo.